

Coins

Some changes ahead: Miller signs in and bucks get a new look

By Roger Boye

FRESH \$1 bills to be put into circulation soon are sporting a new signature and series-year letter.

Although the changes are tiny in size, they are significant because most currency buffs collect bills based on the signatures, among other things.

The new Federal Reserve notes carry the facsimile autograph of G. William Miller, who replaced W. Michael Blumenthal as Treasury secretary in August. The series year is 1977A, rather than the "1977" used on \$1 bills with Blumenthal's signature.

Eventually, similar changes also may be made on bills of other denominations.

Meanwhile, several congressmen have introduced legislation that would prevent the government from stopping production of the \$1 bill in an attempt to force consumers to use the Anthony dollar coin. Earlier this fall, Treasury Department executives hinted that they eventually might make such a move.

Some of the congressmen cited a Gallup poll taken in October as evidence of public sentiment. The poll indicates that two-thirds of the country's population dislikes the new coin because it closely resembles a quarter and is not easy to use.

AFTER MONTHS of delay, Treasury experts finally have begun to work in earnest on a series of gold medals that will be sold

nationwide starting in mid-1980.

Congress passed legislation last year authorizing production of the medals, but didn't appropriate money to pay start-up expenses until two months ago.

According to the law, medals containing a half-ounce and one ounce of gold are to be minted for five years and sold to the public for the price of the gold plus production costs. Although the Treasury Department has not yet announced marketing plans, it wants to ensure wide distribution of the medals.

In 1980, the U.S. Mint is expected to produce about 1.5 million medals honoring Grant Wood, the artist who painted "American Gothic," and operatic singer Marian Anderson. Eight other persons who excelled in the arts will be depicted on additional gold medals produced before 1985.

THOUSANDS OF collectors probably won't receive their 1979 proof sets by the Dec. 31 delivery deadline, said Mint director Stella B. Hackel.

Mint workers are at least two weeks behind schedule in filling orders because of delays in receiving plastic cases from commercial sources. Consequently, many collectors may have to wait until mid-January for their sets.

During the six-week ordering period last spring, 1.16 million collectors bought 3.67 million proof sets. In 1978, the mint sold 3.1 million sets.